

## ARNOLD ARBORETUM

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**Philadelphus.** Few plants give greater beauty to northern gardens than the Syringas or Mock Oranges. These are the unfortunate popular names of the different species of *Philadelphus*, for *Syringa* is the botanical name of the Lilac, and Mock Orange is the popular name of *Prunus caroliniana*, a southern evergreen Cherry which is much planted in the southern states as an ornamental tree and in making hedges. The species of *Philadelphus* grow naturally in southeastern Europe and the Caucasus, in the United States on the southern Appalachian Mountains, in western Texas, on the southern Rocky Mountains, and in the northwestern states, in Japan, Korea, northern and western China, and on the Himalayas. In the last twenty years much attention has been paid to the introduction of new species; artificial and natural hybrids, too, have increased the number of these plants, and there are now growing in the Arboretum some thirty species and a number of varieties and hybrids. The flowering period of the Syringas extends through six or seven weeks and, with few exceptions, none of them begin to bloom until that of most Lilacs and of the Bush Honeysuckles has passed. With its development in recent years *Philadelphus* has become one of the important groups of garden shrubs to be ranked with the Lilacs, Bush Honeysuckles, Viburnums and Azaleas. The species and hybrids of *Philadelphus* are nearly all hardy in Massachusetts but the white and usually fragrant flowers are their only attraction. They are not particularly interesting in habit; the foliage is dull; the leaves fall without change of color, and the fruit, which is a dry capsule, is smaller and not more attractive than that of the Lilac. All the Syringas flower freely nearly every year; they need rich, well-drained soil,

and the presence of lime in it has no bad effects on them. Better than most shrubs they can support shade and their ability to grow and flower under trees make them valuable as undergrowth in border plantations.

The Mock Orange of all old gardens is *Syringa coronarius*, the eastern European species. This plant was first cultivated in England before the end of the sixteenth century and was probably one of the first garden shrubs brought to America by the English settlers. It is a medium-sized shrub often as broad as high. The flowers, too, are of medium size and faintly tinged with yellow. This shrub has been somewhat neglected since so many species and hybrids with larger and showier flowers have found their way into gardens. This is unfortunate, for no other *Syringa* equals the old-fashioned Mock Orange in the delicate perfume of its flowers. Varieties of this plant with yellow leaves, with double flowers, and with narrow willow-like leaves can be seen in the Arboretum collection, but none of them have any particular decorative value. Among the American species which should find a place in all gardens are *P. inodorus*, *P. pubescens*, and *P. microphyllus*. The first is a native of the Appalachian Mountain region and grows to the height of six feet; it has arching branches and large, solitary, pure white, cup-shaped, scentless flowers. By some persons it is considered the most beautiful of all *Syringas*. *P. pubescens*, often called *P. grandiflorus* or *P. latifolia* is also a plant of the southern Appalachian region. It often grows to the height of twenty feet; the branches are stout and erect; the leaves are broad, and the slightly fragrant flowers are arranged in erect, from five- to ten-flowered racemes. This plant is more common in gardens than the last and when it is in bloom it makes a great show. *P. microphyllus*, which rarely grows more than three feet tall, has slender stems, and leaves and flowers smaller than those of any *Philadelphus* in cultivation. What the flowers lack in size, however, is made up in fragrance which is stronger than that of any other *Syringa* and perfumes the air for a long distance.

The most distinct and the handsomest of the Asiatic species in the Arboretum is *Philadelphus purpurascens*, discovered by Wilson in western China. It is a large shrub with long arching stems from which rise numerous branchlets from four to six inches long and spreading at right angles; on these branchlets the flowers are borne on drooping stalks; they are an inch and a half long, with a bright purple calyx and pure white petals which do not spread as they do on most of the species but form a bell-shaped corolla and are exceedingly fragrant. This is one of the handsomest of the shrubs brought from western China to the Arboretum. *Philadelphus Magdalenae* is another Chinese species well worth cultivation. It is a tall broad shrub with arching stems, small dark green leaves and pure white fragrant flowers an inch and a quarter in diameter and arranged in drooping, leafy, many-flowered clusters from six to ten inches in length. *Philadelphus pekinensis* from northern China and Mongolia is a stout bush rather broader than high which every year produces great quantities of small flowers tinged



with yellow. Another interesting garden plant, *P. Falconerii*, which is certainly Asiatic and probably Japanese, has narrow lanceolate leaves and fragrant flowers in from one- to six-flowered racemes, and is distinct in the shape of its leaves and in its long narrow petals. The origin and history of this plant is not known.

**Hybrid Philadelphus.** The first hybrid Philadelphus which attracted attention was raised in France before 1870 by a Monsieur Billard, and is sometimes called in gardens Souvenir de Billard, although the correct name for it is *Philadelphus insignis*. This hybrid is one of the handsomest of all the tall-growing Syringas, and its value is increased by the fact that it is one of the latest of them all to flower. In a few old gardens in the neighborhood of Boston great Syringa bushes occasionally thirty feet high and correspondingly broad are sometimes found. These plants are believed to be hybrids between *P. coronarius* and some unrecognized species. It is called *Philadelphus maximus*. Another hybrid, *P. magnificus*, sprang up in the Arboretum several years ago and is supposed to be a hybrid between two American species, *P. inodorus* and *P. pubescens*. It is a large and shapely shrub with pure white only slightly fragrant flowers an inch and three-quarters in diameter and borne in erect clusters. *Philadelphus splendens* flowers very freely and when the flowers are open it is the showiest plant in the Syringa Group.

**Lemoine Hybrid Philadelphus.** Several years ago the French plant breeder Lemoine crossed *P. coronarius* with the Rocky mountain *P. microphyllus* and obtained an entirely new race to which the general name of *P. Lemoinei* was given. The original bush is intermediate between the parents in size and in the size of the flowers. The flowers are pure white, very fragrant and produced in profusion. From this plant Lemoine raised many seedlings and secondary hybrids and these vary from the original *P. Lemoinei* in size and in the size and shape of the flowers. Taken as a whole the Lemoine hybrid Syringas form one of the most beautiful groups of garden plants that has been created by man. There are a number of these plants in the Arboretum collection and they have been considered perfectly hardy here, but last winter was too cold for some of them. *P. Lemoinei* itself and many of its varieties are uninjured, but a few of the second hybrids were killed to the ground but are now growing again from the roots. Unfortunately among the injured is the little plant called Conquête which is usually considered the handsomest of these Lemoine Syringas. This is the midseason for Philadelphus. The flowers of the Korean *P. Schneekii* var. *Jackii*, which are always the first to open, faded nearly two weeks ago, and the buds on some of the other species and hybrids will not open for nearly a month.

**The Sour Gum or Tupelo** (*Nyssa sylvatica*) is now in flower. The minute yellow-green flowers of this tree are hidden by the leaves and will only be seen by persons who are specially looking for them. In spite of its inconspicuous flowers the Sour Gum is one of the handsome trees of eastern North America where it grows from Maine to Florida and Texas. The greatest beauty of this tree is in its lustrous, dark

green leaves which in early autumn turn orange and scarlet, and then are not surpassed in brilliancy by the leaves of any other American tree. The bright blue shining fruits, which are about two-thirds of an inch long, are also ornamental. This tree varies greatly in habit. Near the coast it is low with a broad, flat or rounded had. Such trees are common on Cape Cod and near the northern shore of Long Island Sound. In the interior, and on the slopes of the southern Appalachian Mountains, where it grows to its largest size, it is often a hundred feet high, with a tall massive trunk four or five feet in diameter and a narrow head of erect branches. Few American trees are better worth cultivating for the ornament of parks, but no one in these days plants a Sour Gum. The long hard roots make it difficult to transplant, and only small seedlings can be successfully moved. Those persons who care only for "immediate effect," the slogan of Americans of the twentieth century who believe that money only is needed to secure fully grown trees, have little use for the Sour Gum which wisely rebels against the modern method of tree-planting which menaces the future of too many American country estates.

**Cornus kousa.** The flower-buds of this eastern Asiatic representative of our Flowering Dogwood were not injured by the winter which ruined those of the American tree, and the Japanese form of *Cornus kousa* is now in bloom. It is a small tree or large shrub and the white bracts which surround the clusters of flowers are smaller than those of our native tree and are pointed. The form from western China has rather larger flower-bracts than those of the Japanese plant. The fact that the flower-buds of the Asiatic tree have not been injured by the cold of the past winter adds to its value.

**The Mountain Laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*)** is in bloom. Occasionally more plants on the bank at the northern base of Hemlock Hill have flowered than are flowering this year, but the display is much better than it was a year ago, and the Arboretum Laurels are now well worth a visit. The Mountain Laurel is a remarkable plant. It can be seen in full bloom near the shores of Mississippi Sound during the first week of April, and travelling north one can see its flowers every day until early July when the northern limit of its range in New Brunswick and the northern shore of Lake Erie is reached. It grows as well in New England as it does in regions where the climate is less rigorous, but in New England the plants never grow to the size they attain on the Blue Ridge of North and South Carolina about the headwaters of the Savannah and Little Tennessee Rivers. Few plants have more beautiful flowers; and the Mountain Laurel is a broad-leaved evergreen, and broad-leaved evergreens which are hardy in Massachusetts, with the exception of a few low under shrubs, can be almost counted on the fingers of one hand. For of these plants only the *Kalmia latifolia*, *Rhododendron catawbiense*, *R. maximum* and *Andromeda floribunda* can be absolutely depended on. A few more *Rhododendrons* might be added to the list, but after the experience of recent years it is not safe to say that any foreign species or any hybrid *Rhododendron* will prove hardy under all the weather conditions Massachusetts may experience.